

# 2019-20 Annual Report

*Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences*



# Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences

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*as of March 1, 2021*

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## Dear Friends,

FY 2020 was, of course, a year of extraordinary challenge. It was also a year when the critical importance of science was on display to a degree rarely seen in recent times. As the Buffalo Museum of Science moved from celebrating the opening of the US premiere exhibit *Golden Mummies of Egypt* presented by M&T Bank on February 8 to closing our doors to the public just five weeks later, 2020 presented no shortage of trials.

Throughout the year, in response to unprecedented demands on programming and operations, and with the dedicated and generous backing of our supporters, we worked to meet the opportunities as they came. We were agile in the creation of new virtual programming, and deft in evolving those offerings as we learned how to better meet our audiences' interests. We were creative in adapting our beloved hands-on exhibits so that they could be manipulated safely, and we were gratified to have the run of *Golden Mummies of Egypt* extended through the end of the fiscal year and beyond.

**While holding the safety of our staff, volunteers, and guests paramount, in our programming and operational decisions we prioritized providing as much opportunity for entertainment and education for our community as possible.** Our mission may be more important than ever before, and certainly the engaging programming we provide is in great demand. Thank you for taking some time to review this report and read about our accomplishments.

We are looking to the future with hopefulness and ambition. With the pandemic shaping so much of our experience, we must recognize how crucial it is that we, as a society, have capacity in science. At the Buffalo Museum of Science and Tiff Nature Preserve, we inspire curiosity, stimulate STEM thinking, and motivate the science professionals of tomorrow. Our work is deeply important. We thank you for your dedicated support.

Marisa Wigglesworth  
President and CEO  
Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences

David Busch  
Chairman of the Board  
Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences

# 2020: A YEAR OF RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

**“I’m asking you all to be safe and please – go home.”**

Those were the closing words Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences President and CEO Marisa Wigglesworth shared with a group of Society team members in the Museum’s auditorium on Monday, March 16, 2020. Like all other major cultural organizations in Western New York, the Museum and Tifft Nature Preserve closed its doors to guests the previous Friday to do their part in reducing the spread of COVID-19. With government officials encouraging businesses to work remotely whenever possible, the BSNS was following suit.



Marisa Wigglesworth addresses BSNS staff on March 16, 2020

Bewildered staff gathered files, laptops, and random materials for science demonstrations and activities – not quite knowing what they would do with them yet – and made their separate ways home.

There were so many questions for which Wigglesworth and the BSNS Leadership Team simply didn’t have answers.

## ***The biggest question: When will we reopen?***

Little did they know at the time that it would be months before that question would be answered; but there was one thing they all knew – the Society had a responsibility to

continue its mission at a time when raising science literacy was paramount.

But how does a community-serving organization engage with its audiences without a facility, classrooms or outreach opportunities? Much like the stories of the cultures and organisms the organization has been sharing with guests for generations, they knew they had to adapt and evolve.

Floor demonstrations turned into daily Virtual Science Fair activities, Museum tours were guided through recorded video and live virtual Q&A, summer Discovery Camps transformed into remote engagements, and weekly Leadership Team meetings became daily to be able to nimbly respond to the ever-changing news and guidelines for navigating a global pandemic.

From mid-March through June, the Museum remained all but vacant aside from a handful of essential employees tending to billing and payroll, and ensuring the safety of the collection and building. The usual echoes of visitor chatter were absent from Hamlin Hall. Ancient mummies sat quietly in the temporary exhibit gallery thousands of miles from their Manchester home waiting to be enjoyed.

The scene at Tifft was livelier than usual with hundreds of guests seeking an outdoor escape from their homes. All passed a closed Herb and Jane Darling Environmental Education Center – once alive with visitors, birthday parties, and programs – as they made their way toward the trails.

As weeks went by and refunds for hundreds of exhibit tickets, summer camps, field trips, birthday parties, and cancelled events were processed, the reality of the organization’s financial outlook quickly set in. Memberships were extended for the length of the temporary closure and renewal and new membership fees all but evaporated.

Difficult decisions needed to be made to preserve the sustainability of the organization. Valued and talented team members were put on temporary leave or saw a reduction in hours, and staff numbers dropped from 88 to 30. Leadership Team members took voluntary pay cuts. Budget projections were dissected and scrutinized to determine where revenues could possibly be made and savings found while still being able to preserve staff and continue serving the community.

**Despite these and many other challenges, the Society demonstrated the resilience we've built throughout our 160-year history, and opportunities were uncovered through the crisis.** Our enthusiastic staff built new skillsets to engage with the public in activities and workshops through virtual platforms; team members tackled the art of video editing in order to share our collections and knowledge with individuals and families sequestered to their homes. Leadership Team members and staff shifted roles and responsibilities to fill in gaps and ensure we were in position to rebound when the time finally came.

**Most importantly, a groundswell of support from donors and corporate partners reassured the Society that we were not alone, and that our work mattered and was valued.**

A federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan as well as foundation grants helped cover critical operational needs to secure the buildings and collection, as well as essential salaries and health benefits for the lean remaining staff.

Finally, after a temporary four-month closure, the Museum began its gradual reopening on July 10, 2020, and invited the public to enjoy the second floor Science Studios and the extended U.S. premier of *Golden Mummies of Egypt*. Masked guests were welcomed by upbeat and relieved team members, free styluses to safely interact with displays, frequently sanitized exhibit spaces, and signs that provided friendly reminders to maintain social distancing.

Tifft developed a suite of private tours for households and small social groups to explore the Preserve with fresh eyes, and to get outdoors and away from their dwellings.

The Society's revenue lines may have taken a hard hit due to the shutdown and capacity restrictions, but there was a silver lining. Over the course of the fiscal year, the Museum saw 45 percent of the attendance that it had in 2019 – a success when compared to the 10 to 30 percent seen by most of its industry counterparts across the country. The Society credits much of this attendance to the extension of *Golden Mummies of Egypt* as well as its carefully planned safety protocols and the excitement of guests seeking any sense of normalcy after weeks of entertaining themselves at home.

It was a trying year, but also a year of self-discovery, reflection, and renewed appreciation for the things that really matter: as individuals, as an organization, and as a society.

Challenges will continue into 2021 and beyond. But weathering this storm has shown what we as an institution can overcome together with the support of the Western New York community.





# GOLDEN MUMMIES OF EGYPT

New York City. Los Angeles. Chicago. These are some of the markets one would typically associate with a world premiere of a world-class exhibition. But, with a successful history of hosting blockbuster exhibits and collections-based engagements, the Buffalo Museum of Science had the honor of being selected to debut *Golden Mummies of Egypt*. The new traveling exhibition from England's University of Manchester and NOMAD Exhibitions would open its doors for its very first time in Buffalo with support from presenting sponsor, M&T Bank.

The 100 mummies, portraits and other objects had never been on display as a collective experience before arriving in Buffalo. The Buffalo Museum of Science's Exhibits and Collections teams worked closely with team members from NOMAD Exhibitions and the University of Manchester's Manchester Museum to piece together and construct the carefully planned set works for the very first time, and safely install the mummies and objects in their cases.

On February 6, 2020, over 300 special guests attended the V.I.P. Reception for the grand opening of the 5,000-square-foot exhibition. Society President and CEO Marisa Wigglesworth welcomed Board Members, Donors, sponsors, and Society friends and their families, who all had the opportunity to hear from Manchester Museum's Executive Director Esme Ward and Curator of Egypt and Sudan Dr. Campbell Price before being the first in the world to step through the exhibit's doors, and back in time.

Once inside, guests journeyed through a path of intricate and beautifully displayed objects and narrative to examine the hopes and fears about the afterlife when Egypt was part of the Greek and Roman worlds between 300 BC and AD 200.

Informational panels introduced guests to some of this multicultural society's

elite – wealthy individuals with the means to have their mummified bodies encased in gold in hopes of joining the gods after death. Some mummies featured Greek writings on wax encasements along with Egyptian motifs, demonstrating the blend of cultures that existed in Egypt at that time. Others featured intricate gold gilded masks or the more commonly recognized cartonnage masks that many associate with mummies from Egypt.

The sixteen world-famous Fayum portraits displayed are among the most haunting images from the ancient world. The strikingly lifelike painted portraits highlight the Greek and Roman influence of the



Manchester Museum's Dr. Campbell Price greets guests at the VIP Reception for *Golden Mummies of Egypt*.

people of that time, and represent what is believed to be the age and form in which the individuals would remain in the afterlife. Two portraits that rest within their mummy's wrappings are among just 100 known to still be intact with the remains.

Unique to this exhibition, three of the mummy cases in *Golden Mummies of Egypt* featured interactive touch screens that allowed guests to explore beneath the wrappings thanks to non-invasive CT scan technology. This invaluable research gives a closer look into the individual's life before their death.

The material showcased in the exhibition was excavated by the noted British archaeologist Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie in 1888 from a site known as Hawara. In signage outside the exhibit entrance, the Buffalo Museum of Science acknowledged how the approaches to scientific discoveries change over time, and that Flinders Petrie's field notes and records from over 100 years ago describe processes and language that may no longer be used in scientific endeavors today.

After the V.I.P reception and Member preview, the exhibition opened to the public on February 8 and welcomed over 23,000 guests before the Museum's abrupt closing five weeks later due to the increasing threat posed by COVID-19. During the Museum's temporary closure, Leadership Team members stayed in close communication with Manchester and NOMAD Exhibits and worked together to extend the run to October 18 so that more visitors could experience the extraordinary exhibit before it left Buffalo.

The Museum reopened its second floor and *Golden Mummies of Egypt* on July 10 and was incredibly pleased to welcome guests back into the exhibit space at 25 percent capacity. With no more than 20 guests entering every 15 minutes, visitors were able to safely spread out through the space and finally get an up-close look at the mummies and objects that sat without an audience for so long.

Local media also celebrated the reopening. The Buffalo News and all major networks shared the reopening with Western New Yorkers. Interviewed guests commented on how safe they felt while visiting, and how excited they were to have the opportunity to experience the exhibit after the five-month hiatus.

As the new October closing date loomed, the exhibit was once again extended to January 3, 2021. In all, the exhibit was hosted within the Buffalo Museum of Science for a full year with half of that time being open to the public. A total of 37,953 guests were able to enjoy the exhibit before it left for its next stay at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh.



Promotional support for Golden Mummies of Egypt was provided by Market New York through I LOVE NY/ New York State's Division of Tourism as a part of the Regional Economic Development Council awards



# A VIRTUAL QUEST TO FIND WHY

The Museum's Learning & Interpretation (L&I) team entered the 2020 fiscal year with aspirational plans to broaden its reach into schools and with community members and visitors.

L&I staff were continuing the Society's long-standing contract with the Buffalo Public Schools, bringing STEM enrichment into the classes at the BPS 59 **Charles R. Drew Science Magnet** through a suite of robust programming.

Through a separate contract with the Northwest Buffalo Community Center, staff were continuing to facilitate **Saturday Academy programming** at the Science Magnet school for 90 minutes twice a month.

Funding from the Cullen Foundation was also driving the **East-Sci Out of School Time Initiative** to bring after-school programming to 170 students from Buffalo's East Side five days a week.



Young scientists prepare their home “lab” for a *Virtual Science Fair* activity.

Looking ahead, the U.S. Premier of *Golden Mummies of Egypt* would provide opportunities to incorporate this special theme into our family and adult programming. The popular summer Discovery Camp program would expand to meet camper demand, and the L&I team was planning timely and relevant topics for its new Conversations in Science series that offered a platform for the public to engage with local STEM leaders.

*But, in the blink of an eye, the pandemic changed everything. After closing our doors in March, the L&I department quickly shifted to online learning:*

To help inspire parents and educators and encourage them to create STEM experiences for the children in their lives, staff developed the **Virtual Science Fair**, which was presented by KeyBank in partnership with First Niagara Foundation. Every weekday from March 23 through July 3, instructions for a STEM experiment or activity that required easily accessible household items was posted to the Museum and Tiftt's social media channels and websites. Families engaged with the Museum through these channels by posting their completed activities and sharing their observations.

Virtual learning was not something that the organization was initially prepared to take on, so a significant investment in technology had to be made to create high quality programming. Thanks to a generous donation from Linde, the Society was able to outfit **two virtual education stations – one at the Museum and another at Tiftt Nature Preserve** – with new and updated software and hardware including cameras, microphones and lighting. This investment allows the Society to produce higher quality content and engagement with students and families around Western New York and beyond.

A screenshot of a virtual science fair activity page. The page has a blue header with the Buffalo Museum of Science and Tiftt logos. The title is "Virtual Science Fair" and the activity is "Cartesian Divers". It includes a materials list, a procedure with numbered steps, and several small images showing the experiment in progress. The text is white and blue on a dark background.

**MATERIALS LIST:**

- 1 plastic bottle (cut and I don't want to cut it)
- 1 cork
- 1 small plastic packet (like a ketchup packet)

**PROCEDURE:**

*Have science fun as a family! Complete activities with parental supervision.*

1. First, cut your ketchup packet. Not all packets will float in water, but we need one that does for this activity.
2. Fill up the bottle to the top.
3. Over a sink or a basin, take the ketchup packet and carefully push it into the bottle—be careful not to squeeze it open!
4. Tightly screw on the top.
5. Squeeze the sides of the bottle. What happens to the ketchup packet?

**WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?**

The experiment that you are doing is called Cartesian Divers. It is named after the French philosopher René Descartes. He was a mathematician and philosopher. He was the first to describe the relationship between density, mass, and volume.

**DENSITY = MASS/VOLUME**

Remember that the ketchup packet is denser than water. When you squeeze the bottle, the water inside the bottle is pushed out and the ketchup packet is pushed in. This makes the ketchup packet denser than the water and it sinks.

**TRY THIS!**

How can we change up this experiment? Do different condiments have the same effect? Does the size of the bottle change anything? What other variables can you think of to change?

Both the Museum and Tiftt had to pivot their plans for their popular summer Discovery Camps and instead offered virtual **Summer of Science** programming. Participants ages 5 to 12 would log in for up to three hours, three days a week and engage with Museum and Tiftt Facilitators of Learning to explore a variety of STEM topics over the course of eight weeks. Participants also received kits with specialized supplies catered to each topic area so they



Director of Museum Programs and Experience, Sarajane Gornak-Green, demonstrates mystifying properties of liquid nitrogen for Virtual Bubblefest at Home presented by Linde.

could experiment and explore from their home. Over the course of eight weeks, 167 registrants participated in these programs.

BubbleFEST also looked a little different this year. Virtual BubbleFEST at Home, presented by Linde, included a kit of materials for families to create an at-home BubbleFEST experience on their own. In addition to special BubbleFEST kits, participants joined live Zoom sessions to present messy or large-scale demonstrations that our annual BubbleFEST guests have come to know and love at the in-person event.

While it was a challenging year of reinvention and reimagining, the L&I team was successful in continuing to make its programming accessible to a range of public and school audiences. Equipped with new skillsets and experiences under our belts, the Society is better positioned to expand its reach into the Western New York community and beyond.



Bubblefest presenting sponsor, Linde, contributed their own STEM video for the event line-up.



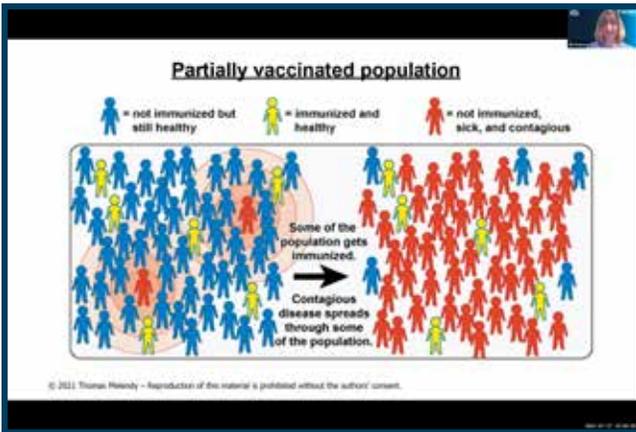
The museum shifted its field trips to virtual tours of our Science Studios.

# ELEVATING SCIENCE LITERACY THROUGH CONVERSATION

Piloted in late 2019, Conversations in Science is a new public platform through which the Buffalo Museum of Science is bringing current science discussions to broader audiences.



Recognizing that everyone should be given the opportunity to engage in science regardless of background, **Conversations in Science seeks to close the gap between scientist's ability to explain their research, and the level of scientific literacy of the public.** In each program, scientists and STEM professionals share a brief overview of their areas of specialization and then dive into the topic. Each program also features a Q&A session to allow the audience to drive the conversation. We intentionally focus on giving a platform to early and mid-career professionals who will be able to build on their experience with the Society for years to come.



This informal conversational approach to discussing science is designed to help the scientists and non-scientists alike make meaningful and personal connections between data and daily life, and also helps presenters improve their communication skills. **Communicating research outside of one's field of study is an important skill often requested in grants and education initiatives, so public involvement in these programs helps scientists move their work forward in meaningful and relevant ways.**

Conversations in Science kicked off the FY2020 year with “Pushing Back Against Antibiotic Resistance,” organized in partnership with the **University at Buffalo Genome, Environment, and Microbiome Community of Excellence** as part of Mind Your Microbiome and Be Antibiotics Aware Week.

After a hiatus in the spring and summer when the Museum was focusing on safely reopening its doors, Conversations in Science returned in a virtual format with support from RP Oak Hill Building Company, focusing on the history and science of pandemics. Presenters were selected across disciplines and organizations in order to offer a variety of access points for talking about and conceptualizing our current situation. Presenters included Dr. Steve MacMartin of **Medaille College**, independent researcher Dr. Catherine Ulman, Dr. Steven Nicholls of **SUNY Buffalo State College**, and **Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center** doctoral trainees Melany Garcia in cancer epidemiology and prevention and Bharani Muppavarapu in the Department of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics.

**Our change in program delivery from in-person to at-home expanded our ability to reach our community by removing some potential barriers to participation including transportation, family caregiving, and hearing access thanks to the Zoom platform's captioning feature.** Even the element of program time became more flexible with the opportunity for participants to send in questions in advance and to view recordings after the program on our YouTube channel.

The Society is pleased with the groundwork that's been laid through the program this past year and looks forward to engaging additional partners to broaden connections between science and the public.



# COLLECTIONS ACROSS PLACE, TIME, AND NOW.. WIFI?

Despite the pandemic, fiscal year 2020 provided many new and ongoing projects and highlights for the Museum's Collections team.

The year started with a splash as the Museum welcomed bestselling author Andrea Wulf as part of a city-wide Humboldt Celebration to recognize the 250th anniversary of the birth of Alexander von Humboldt. Not only did Ms. Wulf engage visitors with her talk about the noted scientist, but we also featured a "Humboldt Pathway" through the Museum and exhibited a handwritten note in Humboldt's own hand that is part of the Museum's special collections.

While accessions to the collection were minimal this year, we made up for quantity in size! Thanks to a generous donation from Dr. Samret Yaukoolbodi, we acquired a very large amethyst geode that stands over six feet tall. This donation was followed up with something of similar scale, a 1:1 scale cast skull of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* from Mr. Ben Pearson.

Dr. Philip Jones, Curator of the South Australian Museum, was able to spend two weeks photographing and documenting the Aboriginal Australian component of the P.G.T. Black Collection before the pandemic forced the Museum to shut its doors. Dr. Jones made some wonderful discoveries, and we look forward to the publication of his findings.

When the Museum closed to the public in March, we quickly pivoted to continue to make the collections available to our members and followers. Transitioning our in-person tours to pre-recorded Mini Virtual Tours and Live Facebook Watch Parties, presented by M&T Bank, gave our collections an international audience. Director of Collections, Kathy Leacock, recorded dozens of short videos highlighting the stories of the Museum's collections – both on exhibit and behind the scenes.

In addition to beloved favorites like Seymour the mastodon, she also took viewers behind the scenes to see the freezer, the rare book room, and other spaces not normally accessible by the public.

Finally, we ended the year on the highest note, in September we were the recipient of a Museums for America Collections Stewardship Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). **The two-year project, entitled *Mussel Memory: Remembering Buffalo's Conchological Legacy through the Digitization of the Unionoida at the Buffalo Museum of Science***, aims to improve accessibility and promote scientific inquiry through the reuration, imaging, and databasing of our freshwater mussel collection. The new digital catalog will be broadly distributed through open-access data repositories and through our PastPerfect Online portal. We will also invite greater community engagement by enhancing the freshwater mussel exhibit in our Rethink Extinct Science Studio, setting up the Collections team with plenty to do in the coming year.



An IMLS grant is driving a two-year project focused on the museum's fresh water mussel collection.



# REACHING BEYOND S.T.E.M. TO SUPPORT TEENS IN 2020

The Museum's Teen STEM Initiative (TSI) completed its second year of programming in 2020 with the continued support of the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation's STEM 2035 Initiative.

Teen STEM initiative is offered to teens on Buffalo's East Side and provides participants with STEM learning and job-readiness skills. By piquing STEM interest in teens, TSI allows youth ages 14 to 18 to explore diverse fields of study and provides them social and emotional experiences and mentorship that will serve them well while they're deciding whether to apply to college, complete a certificate at a trade school, or enter the workforce.

In the first half of the year, our 11 TSI youth exercised their skills in content delivery by leading STEM activities at Buffalo Public Schools Saturday Academy at Charles Drew Science Magnet School and Highgate Heights Elementary.

Their work has also been published online: an article reviewed by TSI for a youth audience was shared on Frontiers for Young Minds, with edits by the author making the content much more conducive to non-specialists and grade 8 – 12 audiences. The article can be found at [kids.frontiersin.org](https://kids.frontiersin.org).

February 2020 saw the Museum's first "TSI Day" for National Engineers Week, sponsored by Northrup Grumman. From egg drop carriage to extracting DNA from strawberries, youth shared their own interests and passions with the public while leading them in engineering challenges. Our showstopper piece was the unveiling and demonstration of a Rube Goldberg machine that watered a plant. One pair translated their experience into a social science project and won 3rd place in the Willie Hutch Jones Educational and Sports Program Science Fair held at the Burchfield Penney Art Center.

The worldwide pandemic shifted our meetings online. As we prepared to make the transition to virtual meetings, we reached out to youth to check on access to computers, information from schools, and to support general wellbeing.

When our regular meeting schedule resumed after a brief month of hiatus we refocused on social and emotional skills and support, with STEM content engagement as a secondary concern. Youth were encouraged to talk about whatever was on their minds. The focus on social and emotional learning and dialogue encouraged continued participation from all of our youth, a huge success for retention and the continuation of the program.

***TSI participant Isaiah Williams shared that, “TSI has been very fulfilling to attend! The transition [to virtual] was very smooth and I like that we literally talk about anything.”***

In May we began providing at-home kits for a learning unit on the physics and culture of Maori poi, which culminated with physically distanced meetings with a local instructor in August 2020.

Also in August 2020 TSI youth created a plan for in-person meetings following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control, New York State, and Erie County Health Department. Physically distanced meetings took place in August for learning poi with an instructor, touring the riverfront with Buffalo Harbor Kayak, and celebrating our graduating seniors.

Over the course of the year the youth created strong bonds of support with their Coach. From supporting member’s podcasts, to selecting a bike for transportation, our teens act as peer-mentors to one another, encouraging and amplifying the value they bring into the world. As many more are preparing to enter into college, our conversations turn to letters of reference, conveying yourself in personal essays, and learning about the variety of financial aid options beyond Federal and State funds.

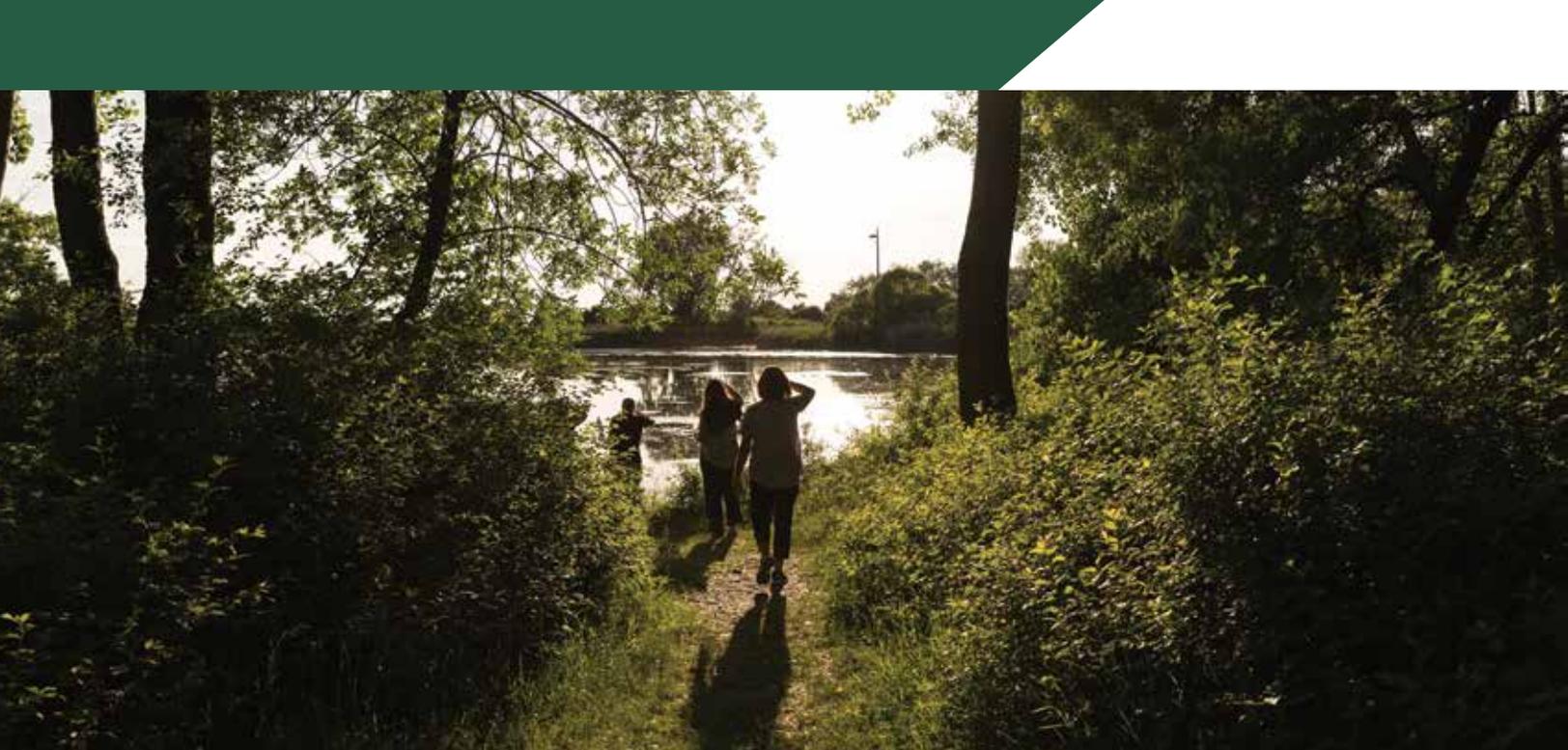


**BSNS staff continued to engage its Teen STEM Initiative participants from a distance via video conference.**

## Ongoing Training to Provide Support

The Museum’s Teen STEM Coordinator and Coach Mason Cruz and Community Partnerships & Adult Programs Manager Gabrielle Graham remain active in the professional learning community formed through the STEM 2035 grant. The STEM 2035 PLC cohort includes 17 out-of-school STEM providers in Western New York and southeast Michigan. Weekly and bi-weekly meetings throughout the spring and summer allowed us to share information and resources, as well as troubleshoot issues in technology, access to materials, and engagement strategies to retain youth during the period of transition to distanced meetings.

Through the STEM 2035 cohort, we developed a common framework for discussing issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, and learned from and worked with peer institutions in problem solving and collaboration. We have also participated in trainings focused on maintaining and expanding equity in our programming through collaboratively built guidelines, responding to changing social and emotional needs of youth in lockdown and during periods of social upheaval, as well as coaching on new technologies and engagement strategies for facilitators and program directors.



# TIFFT NATURE PRESERVE UPDATE

In late 2019, Tifft staff began work to complete a swamp restoration project in the vicinity of the Mosquito Junction Boardwalk Trail. Using funds awarded by the Niagara River Greenway Ecological Standing Committee at the end of the 2019 fiscal year, this three-year project aims to remove invasive *Phragmites* and buckthorn to protect an area of buttonbush that grows along the edge of the marsh and serves as a unique habitat for marsh residents. Removal and treatment of *Phragmites* and buckthorn began in late 2019; native plants secured from a variety of sources were planted, and a nursery to produce plants from local seed was installed near Tifft's maintenance building. Tifft welcomed two Student Conservation Association interns to assist with the first year of this project.

Since the NYS Pause in March 2020, the ultimate focus of the BSNS and Tifft Nature Preserve has been offering safe and accessible engagement for the Western New York Community while maintaining the health and management of the nature preserve. Similar to other outdoor recreation venues, Tifft experienced record high visitation during the spring of 2020 as government and health officials were encouraging everyone to explore the outdoors. The Herb and Jane Darling Environmental Education Center was closed to the public for the remainder of the year; school field trips, scout programs and birthday parties were no longer offered, and the ever-popular Summer Discovery Camps were canceled - yet Tifft's dedication to bring STEM and environmental education remained a priority.

Challenge accepted! Tifft volunteers moved from their usual post at the front desk greeting visitors out into the parking lot and onto the trails, an outdoor station was setup on weekends to allow visitors to interact with items from the education collection to learn more about Tifft's residents, and a classroom was converted into a virtual studio to serve as a home base for an array of virtual experiences. Just as animals and plants adapt to their surroundings, Tifft staff and volunteers showed their adaptability by overcoming the challenges of 2020.



In addition to virtual programs, NY Forward Phase 4 guidelines allowed for Tifft to offer Exclusive Guided Nature Experiences sponsored by Independent Health for a group of up to eight members of the same household or social group. Tifft Facilitators of Learning and volunteers guide groups through programs such as Birding to Relax,

Watercolors Outdoors, Bug-ology Lab, and Restoring Biodiversity. These programs inspire participants of all ages to learn from the past, understand and respect the world we live in, and make change to maintain these resources for future generations.

Despite the changes to programming in 2020, stewardship efforts to maintain and enhance the living collection at Tiff Nature Preserve remained steadfast. Progress on the Mosquito Junction Swamp Restoration project continued with little disruption. The largest impact of the pandemic to move forward on the timeline originally outlined for this project was the inability to have large group volunteer days. Each restoration project completed at Tiff Nature Preserve relies on the support of volunteers to assist with invasive species removal and restoring these areas with native trees, shrubs and seed mixes. Groups from local corporations, businesses, non-profit organizations, and clubs give their time generously to Tiff Nature Preserve each year, allowing the staff at Tiff Nature Preserve to increase capacity for large scale projects. Without these large volunteer work days, progress was reduced.

Although 2020 could be viewed as a year of disruption and endless challenges, the BSNS staff have focused efforts on continuing to further the mission of Tiff Nature Preserve and have gained a larger toolbox to bring STEM and nature education to the WNY community and beyond.



We continue to advance our restoration work at Tiff Nature Preserve during the temporary closure of the Darling Education Center, including clearing of invasive buckthorn.

# DIVERSITY & EQUITY WORKGROUP: PAVING THE WAY FOR PROGRESS

Our country witnessed reprehensible acts that took place across the nation in spring and summer 2020 that called much-needed attention to the racial discrimination, bias, and injustice that is and has been prevalent in our society for far too long. The Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences, which holds the core values of Engagement, Integrity, Diversity, and Knowledge at the center of all we do, recommitted itself to being more proactive in acknowledging and addressing its role and responsibilities to address these inequities, starting with our own organization.

Under the direction of President and CEO Marisa Wigglesworth, the Diversity and Equity Work Group (DEW) was organized on June 16, 2020, to address systemic inequity within operations of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences. This group was formed as part of a commitment to ensure that equity and inclusion pervade all that we do, and to create a welcoming and safe environment for all to ask questions, explore and work. This work is intersectional and includes race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, class, physical appearance, education, neurotype, and language.

Led by two staff co-chairs and several BSNS team members, meetings of the Diversity and Equity Work group are held on a weekly basis. Beginning with a review of the public statement issued in support of Black Lives Matter and the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences Board Diversity Statement, DEW drafted a declaration of intent and focus for the working group, as well as a process for creating and submitting action plans to address internal priorities.

Working with the staff leadership team, DEW co-chairs led discussions on organizational culture, privilege, and identifying and avoiding microaggressions. We recognize that there is much more work to be done. The Society is committed to resourcing and prioritizing this work to continue advancing meaningful change to the benefit of the organization, our staff and volunteers, and all we serve.

## DIVERSITY AND EQUITY WORK GROUP

**The Diversity and Equity Work Group was created to address systemic inequity within operations of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences. As a 159-year-old collecting institution, we are working to acknowledge the colonialism and objectification that are undeniable parts of our deep history, and to renew our commitment to respecting and celebrating the cultures we display.**

**This group was formed as part of a commitment to ensuring that equity and inclusion pervade all that we do, and to create a welcoming and safe environment for all to ask questions, explore and work. This work is intersectional and includes race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, class, physical appearance, education, neurotype, and language.**



### *The actions of the work group include:*

Research of issues presenting barriers to racial equity in the Museum and Tifft, including business operations, staff, and workplace culture.

Identification of challenges to accessibility that present barriers to engagement with the Museum and Tifft, both on-site and off.

Development of suggestions for increasing meaningful inclusion of marginalized groups in Society operations, visitor experiences, and employment opportunities and promotion.

Development of action plans for addressing issues and sharing them with Leadership for implementation.

Recommendations for areas to engage in dialogue with our staff, guests, and community partners.

Advocating for our offerings as BSNS to be clearly communicated on every level: *community, members, walk-ins, staff.*

Providing an avenue for staff to freely bring concerns to be addressed without judgement or retaliation.

# GIVING & SUPPORT

Because of you, amazing things happen at the Buffalo Museum of Science and Tifft Nature Preserve each day. We believe that science creates opportunities and shapes our world. Your generous support reflects how you value the importance of the science around us. Your gifts provide access to all in our community, especially those in under-resourced communities, to the wonders of science and the opportunities of STEM.

*Thank you for your generous support!*

**Individual donors  
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### \$500,000 and above

County of Erie

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Institute of Museum and  
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ZBGA Program

### \$50,000 - \$99,000

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The Buffalo Museum of Science and Tifft Nature Preserve benefited greatly from our group of talented and dedicated volunteers from October 2019 to September 2020. We could not have reopened in July without their generous gift of time!

Over the course of the year **209 volunteers** gave **6,943 hours** of their time to inspire visitors and share their passions with the community.





The Museum welcomed over 500 guests to its sold-out *Get a Clue* fundraiser on January 17, 2020. Teams worked together to solve “whodunit” during the annual Museum-wide mystery experience.

# AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020

## Operating support and revenue

### Net assets without donor restrictions

Government awards	\$1,363,521	36%
Admissions & memberships	947,523	25%
Corporate contributions	454,969	12%
Annual fund contributions	372,647	10%
Education and other fees	321,292	8%
Miscellaneous	28,309	1%
Special events	18,691	<1%
Museum shop sales, net	17,823	<1%
Net assets released from restrictions for operations	293,509	8%
<b>Total operating support and revenue</b>	<b>3,818,284</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Operating expenses

Collections Care	1,418,141	30%
STEM Programs & Education	1,310,742	28%
Museum, Exhibits, & Operations	979,976	20%
Management & Strategy	615,692	13%
Fundraising	417,182	9%
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>4,741,733</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Change in net assets without donor restrictions from operations (923,449)**

### Other changes:

Investment income	1,445,512
Adoption of ASU 2014-09 adjustment	(255,822)

**Change in net assets without donor restrictions 266,241**

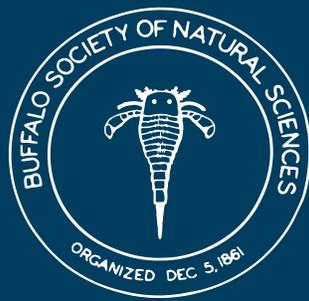
### Net assets with donor restrictions:

Contributions	63,038
Investment return on donor-restricted endowment assets	39,933
Net assets released from restrictions	(293,509)

**Change in net assets with donor restrictions 75,703**

**Net assets - beginning 25,584,866**

**Net assets - ending \$25,660,569**



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*The programs of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences are supported in part by public funds from the County of Erie; City of Buffalo; New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; and our members and friends.*